ON THE STUDY OF DESIGN FROM VEGETAL GROWTH.

DECORATIVE ART SOCIETY.

AT a late meeting of this society a paper was read by Mr. Laugher, "On the Study of Design from Vegetal Growth," illustrated by large sketches recently made in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, by members of the society. This paper originated from a visit to Kew by some members of the society, who were influenced by a desire to trace the relation which form and colour, as applied in the decorative arts, bear to prototypes of vegetal growth, and also, by a wish to render practically evident, a mode by which simple and beautiful designs may readily be derived for the purposes of the industrial arts. The writer stated that an effort of this kind conveyed an assurance, that the members were fearlessly seeking an acquaintance with the beautiful in nature,—being self-dependent, without any other guides than their own reasoning faculties to enlighten their path. We may read often, and it was generally admitted, it was said, that whatever is excellent in art, is simply so from its harmonizing with natural results, more or less common to human experience. The conceptions and expressions of grand works in painting, sculpture, and the other arts, it was observed, derive their value from such an embodiment of scene, or action, or object, as shall have the harmonizing *probability* of a natural aspect rationally sustained throughout. It would be found, that it is this kind of probability which at once excites our sympathy, and induces those associative suggestions which are most impressive on the mind, whilst the reflective faculty, comparison—guided as it always is, and always must be, by human experience—constitutes the test-tube, in which refinement in art can properly be estimated.

It was said that, in an endeavour to recognise and develope the beautiful in sketches from vegetal leaves and stems, it is accordingly necessary to perceive and set forth, in the first place, a general probability of resemblance, and that comparison would afterwards enable us, individually, to trace the limits of application and value of purpose in each sketch. Under such restrictions and considerations, it was contended, that a broad and free translation of effect upon the sketch, rather than the actual minutiæ of microscopic imitation, should be attempted, for-as-much-as poetic ideality can only be developed under the boldest and simplest aspects of *probability*, so thereby art becomes more congenial with, more readily suited to, and more self-sufficient for, the grasp of the human intellect.

A reference was made to the improbabilities in art, as evinced in the romantic phantasies, the exuberant caprices, of Raffaelle's grotesques, on the one hand; and in the inane and meaningless incongruities, so unredeemingly applied, in our day, as decorations for manufactures, on the other. It was asked,—How much of probability can be discovered in the myriads of acanthusian nonentities in the *femoral* scroll, or "thigh-bone nausea" of the French school, with which every description of manufacture has of late years been infested? None, it was said; and that such should therefore be laid aside, as of a degraded class of conventionalities, being without sympathetic appeal to, or influence on, the mind,—in short, as being without art.

After these remarks, the writer observed that it becomes necessary to divest the mind of the spurious elaborations with which the patterns of our manufactures abound, so as to prepare the intellect for detecting and tracing the ever-varying lines of beautiful form, and the endless gradations, contrasts, and harmonies of colour, which pervade all productions of vegetal growth. He said, it was also to be borne in mind that, in thus looking for the beautiful, no two persons are competent to discern it with equal readiness and intensity; practice, and educational training, being necessary to an expert and keen discrimination in such a matter, and more especially so when it becomes the business of life to translate it for the reading of others,—when, as in literature, it would be found that the poetic rendering proves more prepossessing and interesting, as art, to the million, than all the matter-of-fact, dry, and prosy details of merely exact imitation.

USE OF BATH STONE IN LIVERPOOL.

WITH reference to your observations on the Unitarian Church, now in course of erection in Liverpool under our superintendence, we beg to say a few words as to the introduction of Bath stone, which you appear to think undesirable.

You are mistaken or misinformed in supposing that a desirable stone is easily obtained in this locality, at a price *nearly* approaching that of Bath stone, when the comparative amount of labour is considered. It is also difficult, even at an increased price, to obtain *any* stone which so well contrasts with our Upholland (not Rochdale) wall stone. Previously to our obtaining tenders for this church, we made a careful examination of the several descriptions of stone which were calculated to suit the building, and reported thereon to the committee. They were as follows:—Darley Dale stone (Derbyshire), Glasgow stone, Caen stone (which we chiefly wished to introduce), Longridge and Haughton Moor stone (in this neighbourhood), Bath stone, and, as a last resource, Stourton (Cheshire) stone. From motives of economy, all, except the two last-mentioned descriptions of stone, were rejected, as involving an expenditure beyond the available funds, and the question was between Bath and Stourton. It may be as well to mention that the Stourton stone, though much used in this neighbourhood, is very generally condemned, owing to its loose and clayey veins and its great liability to chip from atmospheric action: it is also coarse in grain; and these causes render it especially unsuitable for Gothic work, where sharp arrises, delicate carving, and deep undercutting abound. Now, Bath stone is admirably adapted for these mouldings, and for the most elaborate carvings and tracery, and we have here obtained it at a cost of 5 per cent. beyond the price of Stourton.

We have been the first to introduce Bath stone into Liverpool; and when we look at the churches and public buildings in and about London, and throughout the southern, western, and midland counties in England, in which Bath stone has been adopted, we do not think that we have taken a singular or an unadvised step in using it here, where good stone is so difficult to be had at a fair price. Besides, we have yet to learn that Bath stone is of that perishable nature, of late (and only of late) so much attributed to it.

Nine-tenths of the failures imputed to this stone have occurred through the ignorance or inattention of workmen, or superintendents, in neglecting to work the stones so as to lay on their natural beds, which has laid the pores of the stone open to the effects of rain and frost. Yet, although there have been failures (and we think we are justified in saying that they have only been *partial* failures, and chiefly, if not entirely, owing to the neglect alluded to), there have been many successful specimens of Bath stonework, which may be seen in London, Oxford, Bath, Bristol, &c.

We know an instance on the borders of the Bristol Channel, where an extension of a church was effected some twelve years since, in which, although singularly exposed to saline action, no symptoms of decay have manifested themselves, although the walls were cased throughout with Bath ashlar.

We have troubled you with this letter, not so much for the purpose of explaining as to the material we have used, as in the hope that it will lead to some practical remarks, which may elucidate more clearly how far Bath stone is or is not suitable for the buildings of this country.

BARRY AND BROWN.

CURIOUS DISCOVERY IN ROME.—The following interesting announcement forms part of a letter dated "English College, Rome, Sept. 28, 1848."—"In a vineyard belonging to the chapter of St. John Lateran, some curious sepulchral remains have been discovered, but the series will not be altogether excavated before November. One piece represents a doorway to a temple in the forum, and even this remnant, in consequence of the name and site being inscribed on the cornice, threatens to disturb some portions of our Roman topography. As yet no one is allowed to sketch the fragments.

HOUSE DRAINAGE.

In a letter on this subject, addressed by Mr. Montagu Marriott to the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers, the writer gives evidence, founded on personal experience, in favour of small drains. Discovering "that no brick drain of ordinary construction would keep clean for any length of time," the supply of water being insufficient to prevent the solid matters from accumulating in the drains, and eventually stopping them, "although they have varied in sectional area from 113 to 16 square inches," he says he found an effectual remedy, which he then proceeds to describe,—

"I commenced by using 9-inch pipe drains, which, although much better than those of brick, were subject to some of the same inconveniences, the chief of which was their too great size. I then tried 6-inch, 4-inch, and eventually 3-inch, which size I now use, and find them sufficient for all purposes, and much more easily kept clean than any others.

One of the greatest evils of the old system of drainage was the obligation enforced by the Commissioners of Sewers of carrying every drain through the house to the front, frequently a length of 60 feet, although a much better course might be found at the rear of the premises, within one-fourth of the distance, and which would avoid the injury to health and great part of the expense consequent upon the above regulation. On these considerations alone a back drainage, wherever practicable, should be adopted; but there is another of great importance, viz., that there is much less chance of a deposit being formed if the whole sewage and waste water of a range of houses be carried along one channel than if it were divided into twenty driblets through as many separate drains.

The plan I now adopt, and which I find very effectual with houses not having water-closets, is to run a 3-inch pipe drain of glazed stone-ware from the privy along the backs of the houses, when practicable, to the nearest sewer, keeping it down as low as possible, but allowing a fall of from one to two inches in ten feet, according to circumstances: the cesspool is then emptied and filled up with rubbish, and the drain brought up with an elbow to receive a common glazed stoneware closet-basin, the neck of which ought to be contracted to two inches to prevent any larger substance from passing through. The next step is to provide a supply of water, and although the quantity furnished by the companies at enormous prices is notoriously deficient, and in most cases only supplied three times per week, it may nevertheless, by carefully attending to the rule laid down above of keeping the drain as low as possible, be made to answer the purpose of thoroughly cleansing it. The ball tap should be entirely removed from the supply-pipe,* and a waste-pipe 1¼ inches internal diameter fastened into the water-butt within about two or three inches of the top: this waste-pipe should then lead to and be connected with the orifice left in the water-closet pan for that purpose, care being taken to make a syphon-bend in the lower part to prevent any possibility of the water becoming contaminated. Branches from the rain-water pipe and sink are connected with the drain by means of proper junctions made for that purpose in the earthenware drain pipes: by these means the drain is thoroughly washed down three times per week, or as often as water is supplied to the houses, and all deposit prevented. The tenants in the houses where this plan has been tried speak of it in the highest terms, as rendering the lower rooms both habitable and healthy.

* * * * *

With houses of a superior class where water-closets are already in use, a similar method should be adopted, with some slight variations. The old brick drain should be removed or stopped up, the former if possible, and replaced by a new tube-drain, and the water-closet traps carefully looked to and altered to the *U* or syphon form, if not acting well. I do not consider it perfectly safe to remove the ball tap from the cisterns, as, from their being generally attached to the houses, the consequences of an accident, from frost or other causes, would be serious; but the waste-pipe should be cut two or three inches shorter than usual, and the mouth enlarged, so as to allow the water to pass rapidly off as soon as it rises to a certain height, and the ball tap would still act as a perfect safeguard against overflowing in case of a stoppage of the waste-pipe.

The proper size of pipe drains is a question much discussed and not yet decided. The only necessary point to observe, in order to determine a minimum diameter, is the quantity of storm water they may by any possibility be required to carry off. Now, the greatest quantity I believe, with only one exception, registered during the last forty years, amounted to two inches per hour, which is the utmost it is necessary to provide for; and if we take

* What do the water companies say to this?—ED.

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